

COUNCIL ON CORRECTIONS
Meeting Minutes
September 5, 2019
245 McKee Road
Dover Delaware 4:30-6:00 pm

Attendance COC Members

Darryl Chambers
Muhammad Salaam
Ed Perez
Jane Hovington
Richard Senato
Joe Paesani

Department of Correction

Claire DeMatteis, Commissioner
Monroe Hudson, Deputy Commissioner

Guests:

Barbara Malone, State Secretary NAACP
Erin Goldner, Hope Street
Theodore Wilson, CIT Team
Anthony Harrigan, CIT Team

The Chair opened the meeting with general introductions of all the council members. He also introduced two members of the Community Intervention Team (CIT), of which he is Executive Director. Theodore Wilson, who is being recognized as one of the youth National Violence Prevention Specialist of the year and will be travelling to Sacramento, California and Anthony Harrigan, who is also part of the CIT team.

Commissioner DeMatteis introduced herself and discussed some of the new programs. Her number one goal is to remove “beleaguered and troubled” from being an adjective when they describe the Department of Correction. We were focusing on the dual mission, not just locking them up, throwing away the key and having no programs. We have to be a part of the developing a program of rehabilitation, a second chance while maintain safety and security. The department is doing a lot more positive things than what’s being reported it’s our intent to get that message out. This Governor has signed an executive order and we now have an Office of Reentry Planning and Research. With the Reentry Commission we have seven subcommittees. There is a mobile van it will be sitting in front of Howard Young and will have representation from 6 to 8 agencies involved in the reentry effort and as defenders come out will help them make sure they get the services they need. The toughest piece of this is housing. We have the Vera Institute to come out, at no charge, we received a grant we’re replicating the reform from New York City and New Orleans on housing. We have 5 public housing facilities with very tough guidelines on who can live in the housing. We’re trying to get the public housing to soften these restrictions to help provide housing for these offenders when they released. We have a resource guide now that identifies all the available housing out there for these individuals.

The seven subcommittees are doing hands-on work of how to better coordinate reentry. We have our own statistical analysis department which says we have 76% recidivism. Only three states take into consideration people who violate probation and count that as recidivism, that’s not accurate. We want to take about 500 offenders who follow them through to

determine true recidivism. Our vocational skills training in our prisons are good, but we need to focus on usable skills.

With the reentry effort every single offender in level V is given an assessment of educational and vocational skills. With this information we either help them with skills to get to their GED or in one of the other programs to give them practical skills to help them once they release. We work with private companies on grants, who gave us a grant and we will focus on the Achievement Ctr., in Wilmington to determine better use of the facility in helping these individuals.

The Department of Correction received \$5 million from the bond bill. We will use this funding to convert CVOP and into a level V facility instead of a Level 4 used just for sending people who violate probation. We are closing it as of December 1, do construction from December 15 to January 1 through July 1, this time next year, as a level V Drug Treatment Ctr. To be used statewide. Anyone who is sentenced and in need of addiction help will go to this level V facility. We will be going out for medical vendor, behavior vendor and treatment program. There was additional discussion on changes the new Commission is planning to implement or interested on improving. The Chair advised the Commissioner that the Council was eager to work with her. The Council is looking to understand not what an individual did to end up back in prison, but what they did to not return to prison.

Minutes from the last meeting will be approved at the next meeting. A motion was made by Richard Senato and the motion was seconded by Mohamed Salaam that the meeting will be tabled until the next meeting. There will be a correction on the agenda to state that the last meeting was April and not May.

There was discussion on the election and when the next election should take place.

Mohamed Salaam gave us overview of what happened at the Sunset Committee. They gave us some recommendations and we complied with those recommendations. We sat down and testified regarding what we have done since the last meeting of the Sunset Committee. The Committee asked how they could improve our stability and strengthen us as far as going into the prisons and working with the Commission on Corrections. We gave some recommendations on how things could be improved. The Committee questions the lack of cooperation, we felt that there was a lack of empathy and support in keeping the Council abreast of issues within the prison. We show them that we met in all three counties and that we always have a quorum. The Committee requested and we have had training and that training would come from us visiting the different facilities and learning how they operated.

The Council wants to continue hosting meetings throughout the state. Jane Hovington is asked to schedule one in Sussex, Ed Perez has agreed to schedule a meeting in Dover and Mohammad and Darrell are working to have one in Wilmington. We wanted to know if there is a way we can have a schedule that we can continue to visit the prisons and see the transitions the changes that are going on within the facility. The Legislator Sherry Dorsey Walker asked how she could help us in responding to the families who have questions about

their families with our out of state offenders. The Commissioner stated it will be impossible for the council to get ID cards.

There was a very good relationship with the communications between Alan and the Council when there was a problem we learned of from the streets or a family member. When we spoke to him, he always responded with an answer. Problem was the correspondence between the department and the Council. There are things happening that the department didn't discuss with the council to enable the Council so we could have some assistance when it's presented to the public.

Sunset Committee asked about the educational sessions which some of the officers may have that might help us/arm us to have more knowledge about the operations of officers that we can be better educated so we can establish a better relationship so when we go into the facilities there is a better communicational aspect between us and the officers. When we entered during the shutdown of the facility, the officers would not speak to us, we had to speak to them. If it's possible we like to attend some of the DOC training.

We'd like to schedule 6 visits within the prisons again, Young, Vaughn, Sussex, Baylor, Plumber, Smyrna and Sussex VOP. Commissioner said she would develop the schedule. We would like to have statewide Council meetings as well and visiting the different persons.

Our next meeting is in November and at that meeting we need to do our planning for the coming year.

We then opened up for public comments. Alan usually prepared responses for the questions from the visitors and provided the responses at the next meeting.

Barbara Malone the State Secretary for Delaware NAACP. She has a problem because for the last three or four years the state NAACP has been trying to get into the prison at Vaughn to organize the NAACP committee. I just need what the policy and procedure is to I can complete paperwork to allow the NAACP to get into the prisons to meet with the current chapter. We've had a request from Howard Young to form their own chapter. We need to know what we need to do to have individuals go into the prison to work with this group to form this chapter. Commissioner Dermatitis asked for Barbara's email address so she could contact her and provide her the information needed.

Erin Goldner. She explained the concept of the Hope Street program. She's happy about the focus on addiction within the prison. She discussed how the inmate flows out of the prison and the need especially for the women for the continued connection with their children. Commissioner said that the new program will just focus on man but they are working to include the women as well.

Motion to adjourn by Mohamed salaam second by Jane Hovington meeting adjourned